


1990

CB PRESIDENT BUSH'S "AMERICA THE BEAUTIFUL INITIATIVE" AT THE WHITE HOUSE REMARKS BY PRESIDENT BUSH AND SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE CLAYTON YEUTTER

Clayton K. Yeutter

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AT THE WHITE HOUSE
REMARKS BY PRESIDENT BUSH
AND SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE CLAYTON YEUTTER

BODY:

SEC. YEUTTER: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to this auspicious tree-planting ceremony. We're delighted to have you all here. That's quite a tree that we're going to be planting. I'm not sure we're going to get that job done with two shovels, but maybe that depends on how fast people shovel. At any rate, we'll give you some experience in that regard very shortly. As we begin the program, I'd like to spend just two minutes giving the essence of what the morning's activity is about. Then, I'll introduce some of our special guests here, and then, of course, we'll have an extra special guest coming in to join in very shortly.

This is President Bush's "America the Beautiful Initiative" that we worked on for a number of months. Fundamentally, it has three parts. One part will be a one-time grant of \$35 million that will go to a foundation that will hopefully be established through the legislative process. And the reason we have some of the folks from the Congress here this morning -- one reason, among others -- is because many of them have already indicated a willingness to support the creation of this foundation that can be used to motivate and stimulate and foster tree-planting efforts in urban communities around the country.

But, in addition to that one-time establishment of a foundation which will be done legislatively through the help of some of these folks, we provided \$175 million in the budget of our forest service at the Department of Agriculture for this effort which will be the largest tree-planting effort ever undertaken in the history of the United States. The goal will be to plant a billion trees a year over the next several years, and that will be through a combination of efforts in the urban sector and in the rural sector.

On the urban side, we plan to spend about \$65 million a year over and above what will be done through foundation activities to help in cities and counties and urban communities of this country to plant a goal of about 30 million trees a year in the urban societies of America. And we think that will be tremendously beneficial in a lot of ways, particularly in combatting pollution. As you know, air quality is a problem in this country. Folks are a bit concerned about global change and the impact on the air that all of us breathe. And certainly some -- we can have a preemptive strike, if you will -- some preventive medicine -- by planting trees which absorb a lot of the air pollutants of this country. And we have a greater need for that in the urban areas than we do anywhere else. But, we will not forget the rural areas either because there are

lots of places in this country, particularly in the south, where we can do more in the way of planting of trees out in rural areas. We're going to put about \$110 million a year in that project as well.

Now, with respect to who's going to help us legislatively as we pull all of this together into a cohesive package, I would like to introduce the folks who are up here at the podium with me. If you'll all just stand one by one, we'll recognize each of you.

Congressman de la Garza, who is chairman of the House Agriculture Committee. (Applause.)

Senator Pat Leahy of Vermont, chairman of the Senate Agriculture Committee. (Applause.)

Senator Dick Lugar, ranking minority in the Senate Ag Committee. (Applause.)

Bill Reilly, who is our administrator of EPA. (Applause.)

Mike Deland, chairman of the Council on Environmental Quality. (Applause.)

Then a special guest up here is Irvin Williams (sp), who is superintendent of the White House grounds. (Applause.)

And now an extra special guest, waiting in the wings -- (applause) -- the President and Mrs. Bush. (Applause.)

And now our chief tree planter in the United States and his marvelous spouse, who will be joining him in this effort, President Bush.

PRESIDENT BUSH: All right. Well, please be seated, and thank you, Secretary Yeutter. Bill Reilly and Chairman Deland and Senators Lugar and Leahy and Congressman Kika de la Garza, the chairman also in the House Ag Committee, and distinguished members of Congress here. And I want to single out two other special friends, pioneers in this greening effort, tree planting, Trammell Crowe (sp) and Margaret from Dallas, Texas. And distinguished ladies and gentlemen. And Irv, I haven't forgotten you -- Irv Williams, who was introduced by Clayt, really does so much to just keep the White House grounds beautiful, and we're indebted to him every single day that we have custodianship of this lovely house. Welcome to all of you, to an event which celebrates how trees can preserve and protect our great outdoors.

I want to talk just a little about the precious inheritance of trees passed from one generation to another. We see it in the great ebonies of India or the sequoias in California, the lush rainforests in South America, and the evergreens of the Alps. Their very presence demands that we renew and restore the natural beauty of our land. Trees do enhance our atmosphere, providing oxygen and absorbing carbon dioxide. A tree planted today can enrich the lives of generations yet unborn. Just think, on these grounds stands a tree planted by John Quincy Adams in 1826. Nearby is the spot where Woodrow Wilson's family so loved bay trees that they often ate lunch in a makeshift grove, and not far from here is the little-leafed linden planted in 1937 by Franklin Roosevelt for Britain's King George VI. Next to the Oval Office, there you will find an oak tree planted by President Eisenhower and there is a swing on it -- you can almost see it, over past that Suburban over there -- and often our grandchild swings on it, and I expect in the future many other grandchildren of Presidents will do the same. Trees are truly an inheritance that links generations of America.

Last summer a terrible wind storm swept through Washington, and I remember thinking of these trees around us and the link they provide. The truth is that Barbara and I were a little worried about them.

Grover Cleveland's Japanese spider leaf for instance, or Herbert Hoover's oak, they are old trees and maybe I am beginning to feel an affinity for them with my birthday coming up, but nevertheless they are special.

For instance, the magnolia over there was planted by Andrew Jackson -- the one next to the South Portico. Thankfully, the trees here weren't damaged in that storm. Elsewhere in Washington it was a different story, a lot of people out the next morning surveying the damage, mourning the loss of a favorite oak or an elm, regarding it with concern and affection just as you would view a friend. Trees can be fragile, they can be sturdy, but they are also precious. So, in the budget I submitted to Congress I asked for 175 million [dollars] to plant one billion trees a year, and today I'm asking Congress to approve another step to protect the environment, we call it the National Tree Trust Act of 1990. It will foster the partnership between public and private sectors to plant trees all across America.

Under our plan we will designate a private non-profit foundation to receive a one-time federal grant to promote community tree planting and cultivation projects, a foundation to solicit contributions from private sources, forging cooperation between individuals, businesses, governments, and community

organizations. It will sound a nationwide call for each American to become a volunteer for the environment, and most of all, plant the trees that clean our air and prevent erosion, consume carbon dioxide and purify the water. And this act can preserve the heritage of trees, their beauty that is breathtaking and their bounty that is breath-giving.

As you can imagine, the foundation's funding won't simply come out of the woodwork. In addition to the 35 million [dollars] in federal money we're proposing, the foundation will begin to raise millions of dollars more to help reforest America. The Tree Trust Act will work by using state forestry agencies and private tree planting organizations, volunteers helping thousands of new volunteers to learn not only how and where to plant trees, but how to care for them, why we need them, and how they help the environment. Our foundation will be one of a thousand points of light, creating 10 billion trees of life.

By planting trees in all 50 states, we'll knock Johnny Appleseed out of the Guinness Book of Records. And the National Tree Trust Act of 1990 is a key part of our national tree planting and forest improvement initiative to be administered by the Ag Department. And this two-part program involves both rural areas as well as local tree planting programs in the cities. And it in turn is crucial to my America the Beautiful program, which I announced in the State of the Union. I am proud of America the Beautiful. It will help maintain and expand our parks, wildlife refuges, forests, and public lands. And I do love the outdoors, and I love exploring it with those who are the trustees of our future.

What we're doing today is planting the seeds of environmental stewardship. And that means not only planting trees, but other steps just as vital. Clean air, for example. Our clean air proposal promises relief from the smog, acid rain and toxic pollution that harms tree and people.

And once again, I call on the Congress to pass the bill. We are also working hard on energy efficiency and pollution prevention, clean oceans, global cooperation. Just as a tree grows with roots and branches spreading, our efforts on all these issues will reach into the future.

Nearly a quarter of a century ago, perhaps America's greatest conservationist, Teddy Roosevelt, put it best when he called our lands and wildlife, "The property of unborn generations." And when he said this about America's sequoias and redwoods, "They should be kept just as we keep a great and beautiful cathedral."

Today ours is the chance to keep that cathedral great and beautiful by planting not only sequoias and redwoods, but poplars, and maples, and cyprus, and sassafras, and I can't think of a better time to begin than this spring, the 20th anniversary of an event, Earth Day. Teddy Roosevelt would have loved that one. Four weeks from now we will celebrate it, but I thought we'd get a head start this morning, and so I am pleased to be able to join Barbara as she plants this Eastern red bud -- red bud blossoming tree in a few minutes. By comparison to other trees it seems small today but so years ago did the special tree beside me. My kids were the age of some of you when it too was planted by President Eisenhower, and when you're my age, Barbara's tree can be just as strong and body just as much history, do just as much to insure the splendor of America.

Trees are an inheritance precious to our cathedral of the outdoors. So just look around us and in that context let me thank again Irv -- Irv Williams, thank you sir, and all the people of the White House Grounds Staff for the tender loving care they give to our trees and flowers. So, let us plant the trees and nurture them so that America will remain "America the Beautiful" for generations to come.

I am very pleased that all of you came today, and now with no further ado let's get on with the tree planting.

(Applause.)

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

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dest=swh,mwh,doa,envrmt,cleanair,airpoll,acrain,forest
data

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(Applause.)

END